

Ukrainian folk tale

The Goat and the Ram



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There once lived an Old Man and an Old Woman who had a Goat and a Ram. The Goat and the Ram were great friends: wherever the Goat went, there the Ram was sure to go, too. The Goat would go to the vegetable garden to get some cabbage, and the Ram did the same; the Goat would go to the orchard, and there was the Ram on his heels.

"Old Woman," said the Old Man, "let us chase away the Goat and the Ram, for there's no keeping them out of our orchard and kitchen garden. Go away, you two, and never let me see you again!"



So the Goat and the Ram made themselves a sack and off they went. They walked and they walked and suddenly they saw a wolf's head lying in the middle of a field. Now the Ram was very strong, but not very brave, and the Goat was very brave, but not very strong.

Said the Goat:

"Take the wolf's head, Ram, for you are the stronger."

"Oh, no, Goat, you take it, for you are the braver."



Then they took hold of the wolf's head together, stuffed it into the sack and went their way further.

They walked and they walked and by and by they saw a light burning just ahead.

"That must be a house," said they. "Let us go and spend the night there. The Wolves will never get us if we do."

They went toward the light, and lo and behold! It came from a fire over which several Wolves were cooking porridge.

"Hello there, friends!" called the Goat and the Ram.

"Hello!" the Wolves called back. "It's a good thing you've come. While our porridge is cooking, we shall feast on your flesh."

At this the Goat was much alarmed, and the Ram nearly died of fright.



Said the Goat:

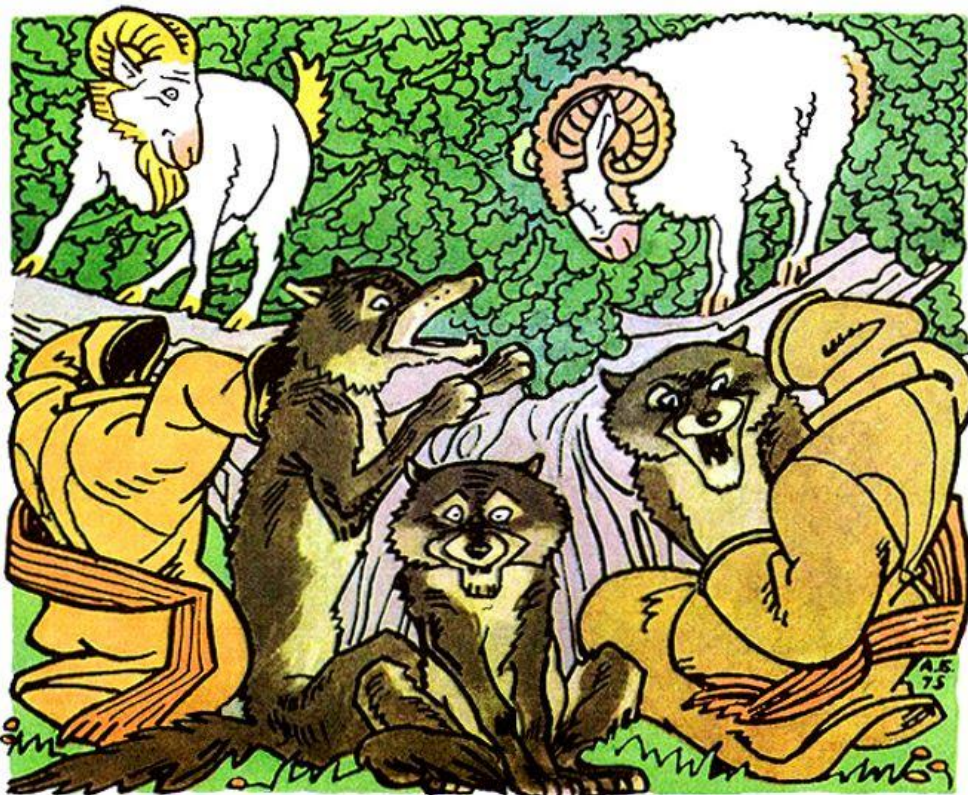
"Take the wolf's head out of the sack, Brother Ram!"

The Ram did as he was told, and the Goat said:

"Not that one. The bigger one!"

The Ram started taking out the very same head, and the Goat said again:

"No! Take out the biggest one!"



Now this startled the Wolves very much indeed and they began to think of a way of making their escape. For there was the Ram taking one wolf's head after another out of the sack!

Said one of the Wolves:

"We're a nice, friendly company gathered here, brothers, and the porridge is cooking well. All it needs is a little more water. I think I'll go and fetch some."

He walked a short way off and said, but so that they could not hear, "A plague on you and your company!" And then he took to his heels.

Now the second Wolf began to think and to wonder how he could best make his escape.

"Look at that rascal!" said he about the first Wolf. "It's as though the earth had swallowed him! He's never brought the water for the porridge. I think I'll take a switch and go bring him back."

And off he went and never came back, either.

And the third Wolf sat there for a while and he said:

"I think I'll go and bring the two of them back!"

And off he ran and was very glad to have had such a narrow escape.

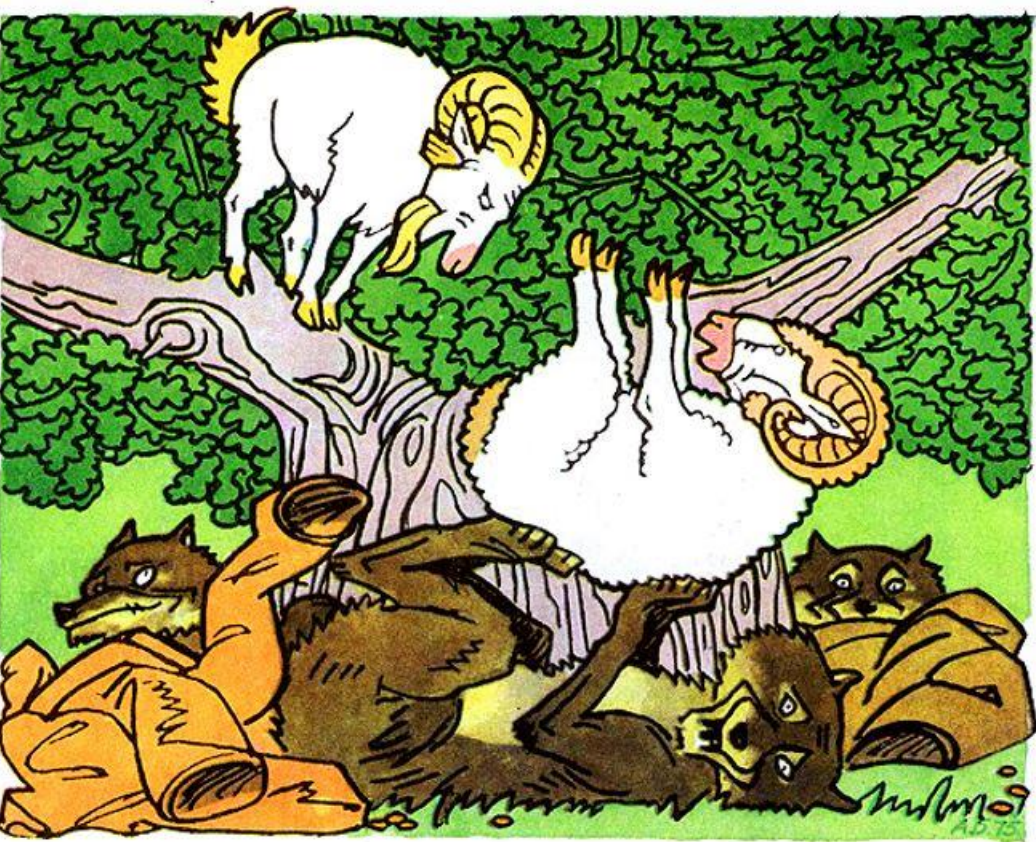
Said the Goat to the Ram:

"Quick, Brother Ram, there's no time to be wasted. Let us eat the porridge and run for our lives."

Meanwhile the first Wolf thought and thought and then he said:

"Whatever made us fear the Goat and Ram, brothers? Let us go back and eat them up, the rascals!"

The Wolves went back, but by that time the Goat and the Ram had finished their porridge, put out the fire and climbed up a tall oak-tree. There they sat, and the Wolves never saw them. They stood under the tree and they thought and wondered how best to overtake the Goat and the Ram. And after a while they looked up, and there were the Goat and the Ram on the oak-tree. The Goat, who was the braver of the two, had climbed to the very top of the tree, and the Ram, who was not so brave, was sitting a little lower.



"Well," said the Wolves to the shaggiest one among them, "you are the eldest, so you must tell us how to make them come down."

The Shaggy Wolf lay down under the tree and began to think and to wonder what he should do.

As for the Ram, he was sitting on his branch and trembling. He tr-r-embled and tr-r-r-embled and he lost his balance and tumbled down, straight on top of the Shaggy Wolf. And the Goat didn't think long before he cried:

"Hand me over that shaggy one!"

And he came down straight on top of the Wolves.



The Wolves started up and they took to their heels down the road, raising clouds of dust as they ran.

And the Goat and the Ram built themselves a little hut and they lived there in health and cheer and grew richer from year to year.